



**COMMONWEALTH INTERCULTURAL ARTS NETWORK Forum:
Andrew Blackburn and Jean Penny 1/4**

A major Malaysian government funded research project currently underway at the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia¹, is exploring "The Imaginary Space" between Malaysian musical culture and Western *musique-mixte* (music for instruments and live electronics). The project is exploring new ways of acquiring knowledge of intercultural connections and understanding through the creation and performance of new music. Based around finding modes of collaboration between composer, technologist and performer; establishing and testing theories of interaction; exploring performance styles incorporating aspects of Malaysian and Western performance modes; and identifying and fusing elements from each tradition through composition and contemporary music technologies, the research works within a multiple theoretical framework. Theories and methods range from the phenomenological and philosophical frameworks of Gadamer and Merleau-Ponty, the aesthetic fusions/juxtapositions of John Cage, to the musical comprehension matrices of Leigh Landy (2007).

As Australians, resident in Malaysia, we have a distinctive opportunity to establish a long term in-depth investigation, where our everyday experiences inform negotiations and dialogue. This research is located in the space between these two cultures, allowing us to reach towards and return, to look at both from either place and direction. Electroacoustic music is creating a location for these unique investigations, and a context from which to draw new information and experience. In intercultural performance, our experience is suggesting that the creative use of technology can reveal what is "invisible" within national identities. It can open "...intellectual and spiritual places, [enlarging] perception and cognition" (Gadamer, 1997). In the Malaysian/Western context being examined, *musique-mixte* composition and performance allows mutuality and reciprocity to flourish, whilst affirming the identity and individuality of each national and cultural identity. Incorporating "technology brings forth more than itself" engenders "...sensory and intellectual awakening to the shared experience" (Merleau-Ponty, cited in Kozel, p.77). Current findings are further suggesting that when aurally familiar cues and artifacts are present in *musique-mixte* works performed to Malaysian audiences, a strong positive and emotional response is generated. Within the framework of the Landy matrices examining musical comprehension, we are appraising the role of familiarity in audience understanding and reception: "...only if we understand [music], if it is 'clear' to us, is it present for us as an artistic composition" (Gadamer, 1997, p.91).

Phases 1 (*The Screaming Serunai*) and 2 (*Synergies of Breath*²) of *The Imaginary Space* have focussed on developing works with Malaysian composers for flute and electronics. The third phase is centred around a performance to be presented at the CAGE101 Conference (August 2013) of John Cage's *Memento Memoria*, which takes as its basis a literary work (originally Joyce's *Finnegans's Wake*, in our production, Malaysian author, Tan Twan Eng's *The Garden of Evening Mists*). The music, art and theatrical elements of this performance are being composed, created and directed by Warren Burt and Catherine Schieve according to Cage's "score" – a list of instructions for performance. Intercultural dialogue in this work reflects Cage's "...constant psychological openness towards disparate aesthetic and cultural traditions of the world ... a formidable platform for experimentation and the formulation of different compositional methodologies, forms, instrumental techniques, performance practices and not least, innovative aesthetic horizons" (Troge, 1999). Intercultural performative, compositional, pedagogical and presentation aspects of this production will be observed and documented.

Performance gives a presence to the research, making the space tangible, and demonstrates the reality that, as Susan Kozel observes, based on Merleau-Ponty, "The invisible is extraordinarily difficult to write about. Perhaps it should be hummed ... if it were to be hummed, it would be the tune that breaks off, because we forget the rest..." (Kozel, p.42).

A performance of new works from each phase of *The Imaginary Space* could be presented. Live performances would require appropriate technology, and would draw together performance and discussion. Videos of performances could also be included, alone or to supplement live.

¹ *The Imaginary Space: Developing Models For An Emergent Malay / Western Electroacoustic Music.* Fundamental Research Grant Scheme project, May 2012 - May 2014.

² See Penny, Blackburn, Ross (2013) *Electroacoustic Music as Intercultural Exploration: Synergies of Breath in Extended Western Flute and Malaysian Nose Flute Playing.* CMPCP conference proceedings paper: at http://www.cmpcp.ac.uk/PSN2/PSN2013_Penny.pdf

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Doctor of Musical Arts (2011) Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, M.Mus. Univ of Melbourne, B. Mus. (Hons. Performance) Univ. of Melbourne, Dip.Ed Univ of Melbourne. Having been appointed Senior Lecturer in Music, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia in October 2011, Andrew has developed a range of expertise which derive from his earlier work in Australia in music education, keyboard performance, music technology, and choral conducting. Andrew taught at Wesley College Melbourne (Head of Arts), has performed widely with many groups, including the Melbourne Symphony, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, and was Director of Music at Toorak Uniting Church, Australia. He conducted many Australian choirs including the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic, the Tudor Choristers, the Choir of the Canterbury Fellowship, various childrens' and youth choirs, and has given choral workshops at the Kodály Institute in Keckskemet, Hungary. Since arriving in Malaysia, Andrew has performed with the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, and given recitals in Malaysia, Australia and Europe. His experience in music technology includes collaborations in interactive sound space projects, live performances, multi media compositions and commissioning organ works. Dr Blackburn has spent the last 8 years researching the interactions of the performer/organist with realtime digital signal processing (DSP), culminating in His DMA - *The Pipe Organ and Realtime Digital Signal Processing: A Performer's Perspective*. He has presented his research at numerous conferences in Australia and internationally, and published recordings and academic journal articles. Current research activities include membership of the Malaysian Government funded FRGS research project - *The Imaginary Space: Developing Models for an Emergent Malay/Western Electroacoustic Music*, and an exploration of the effectiveness of differing rehearsal pedagogies for choral directors.

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Jean Penny is a flautist / researcher / educator, whose work is strongly grounded in traditional Western art music cultures, and has developed over the last decade towards an emphasis on new music performance, intercultural connections and practice-based research activities. She has a background in performance with major Australian symphony orchestras, chamber music, recordings and solo recitals which she has given throughout Australia, Malaysia and Europe. Her research has investigated the nexus of instrument with digital technologies, incorporating diverse artistic-based practice research methodologies, and her doctoral thesis can be seen at: http://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/184782/penny_the_extended_flautist.pdf she was the founder of hutes (new music collective for contemporary performance) and has been curator and director of festivals and concert series in Australia. She has worked extensively as an examiner for the Australian Music Examination Board, has conducted workshops and adjudicated numerous competitions and scholarships. Jean has presented her research at national and international conferences and universities, and published articles in prestigious academic journals and forums. She graduated from the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University with a Doctor of Musical Arts in 2009. In October 2011, Jean was appointed Senior Lecturer at the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris in Malaysia. At this university her work includes research, performances, developing curriculum, writing new courses, and teaching at multiple levels. She is the leader of The Imaginary Space: Developing Models For An Emergent Malay/ Western Electroacoustic Music – Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS), Malaysian Government funded project, and recently completed a University funded project (GPU) – Creation and Performance of New Works for Flute and Electronics. Since July 2012, Dr Penny has been Chief Editor of the peer reviewed Malaysian Music Journal.